4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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nine or 15 days she might begin to work in the house again (Jagor 1876: 199). Earlier yet, for her first birth, a woman would stay in the pollution hut until the next waning of the moon. In later confinements she would remain in the hut for only three days (Birch 1838: 104). The mother of twins, even if poor, should however stay at home looking after them for at least three months, without doing any outside work.

"A girl who has delivered is a good sight; a field with good crops is a good sight," according to one proverb. Within a month of the birth, on an auspicious day, mother and child return to her husband's house. The party must number (including both of them) at least five persons, and must be of an odd number unless it exceeds 21.

> On arrival there, the infant is placed near the feet of an old man standing by a lamp within the milk-house. Placing his right hand over the head of the infant, the old man blesses it, and a feast is held, before the commencement of which two cups, one containing milk, and the other cooked rice, are produced. All the relations take up a little of the rice and milk, and touch the tongue of the baby with them. (Thurston 1909:109)

If a woman becomes pregnant for the twentieth time by the same husband (a previous marriage does not count), then, whether all the offspring are living or not, the couple go right through the wedding and seventh-month-of-pregnancy ceremonies again. These are performed on a lavish scale, even if the husband has to borrow substantially.

The Form and Sex of the Child

4.14. A proverb asks, "If a mother gives birth to a male child, will the father object to it?" Obviously he will not, since it is a blessing to the family (Verghese 1963: 420). The same idea is also expressed thus: "By delivering a son she is like a prima donna standing on a vantage point and calling out;" or "The man who has begotten a son and the man who has planted a coconut [tree] will not spoil." Another saying puts it quite succinctly: "A strong boy, a weak girl;" and yet another emphasizes that girl babies are not much wanted: "Even though you repeatedly tell her, she is